

Review of the snapper fishery (SNA 1)

Q&As as at 12 July 2013

Snapper stock in quota management area SNA 1

Background

Q1: Where is SNA 1?

A: SNA 1 is included in an area from the top of East Northland down to the Bay of Plenty.

Q2: When was the last time that the fishery was assessed?

A: The last SNA 1 stock assessment was completed 13 years ago in 2000. Management settings were last reviewed in 1997.

Q3: How do the recreational and commercial catches compare?

A: The current allowance for recreational and customary fishers is 2600 tonnes and the catch in 2011/12 was estimated to be up to 3900 tonnes. The total allowable commercial catch in 2011/12 was 4500 tonnes, with the actual catch reported as 4615 tonnes.

Q4: What's been happening to the population since the last review?

A: Since the introduction of the QMS the SNA 1 stock has increased, in some areas by up to 70%.

Q5: What is the biggest risk to the recovery of the SNA 1?

A: The fishery has been rebuilding. The increase in biomass is driven by the higher than average numbers of young fish coming into the population – known as recruitment – and the level of harvest. Recruitment is significantly influenced by environmental factors and warm years tend to produce more juveniles than cold years.

To ensure that the stock rebuilds within required timeframes it is important to manage all catch within specified limits. Ongoing levels of catch well above the Total Allowable Commercial Catch and allowances set pose a risk to any rebuild strategy.

Q6: How many jobs are built around the SNA 1 area?

A: Snapper represents around 85% of the value of commercial fisheries in the Hauraki Gulf. Around 820 full time jobs result from direct employment in fishing related jobs in Auckland and a further 360 jobs in Waikato – giving a total of nearly 1200 full time jobs.

Q7: Is MPI committed to a sustainable snapper fishery that will support both the recreational and commercial sectors?

A: Yes. Snapper were introduced into New Zealand's Quota Management System (QMS) in 1986 and the SNA 1 stock has been slowly rebuilding ever since. The QMS sets catch limits that allow the sustainable use of the snapper resource based on scientific stock assessments.

Reason for Review

Q8: Why is MPI undertaking a review now?

A: Snapper is a high priority species. MPI has new information on the health of the fishery, and levels of overall catch.

Q 9: Are current catches unsustainable?

No. Current catches are biologically sustainable. MPI however wants to manage a rebuild of the population to a level that enables the most benefit to all fishers. This is a management target as opposed to a sustainability limit, and we will be working with all stakeholders to identify the best way of managing this fishery.

Q 10: Is the Bay of Plenty population in crisis?

A: The best available information suggests that there is considerable mixing between the Bay of Plenty population and the Hauraki Gulf population. Overall, both populations continue to improve.

Q11: Is it true that fishing should leave stocks at 40% of their estimated historical level?

A: A long-term target for SNA 1 has not been determined. At the moment we are operating at an interim revised target of 40% of the unfished level. This interim target was used for the purposes of the 2013 stock assessment. A long-term target will be discussed with stakeholders as part of developing a long-term management strategy for SNA 1 over the next 12-24 months.

Q12: Who can I talk to with any questions about the review?

A: Please go to <http://www.fish.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/E562E1FD-56AC-4DEB-860B-D553E8F22F40/0/201331IPPRReviewmanagementsnapper1.pdf> for all available information.

Process for the Review

Q 13: What is the end to end process for changing rules in the snapper fishery?

A: Based on best available information, MPI develops a full range of options and consults all stakeholders on behalf of the Minister.

Following consultation, MPI analyses the submissions received and develops final advice to the Minister. The final advice can include any new options raised as part of consultation. The Minister then makes a decision. Any potential catch limit changes would be implemented from 1 October. Any other rule changes (such as bag limits or size restrictions) would be implemented from 1 April 2014.

Q14: What is the process for consultation? Where can I go for more information about it?

A: MPI will start a six week consultation on 12 July 2013. People can go to <http://www.fish.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/E562E1FD-56AC-4DEB-860B-D553E8F22F40/0/201331IPPRReviewmanagementsnapper1.pdf> to view the consultation document and also find out how to make a submission.

MPI will also be holding a series of public meetings in Auckland, Tauranga and Whangarei where information on the snapper fishery and the IPP will be available, and staff will be on hand to answer questions. Timing and specific locations of the meetings will be advertised on the MPI website soon.

Q15: Will I be able to see other people's submissions?

A: MPI will provide a summary of submissions and these will be made available in due course.

Options

Q16: What are the options in the review?

A: All options are on the table.

These include:

- Status quo
- Increase to current catch levels
- Decrease to current catch levels

And a range of options for how any change in catch could be allocated between sectors and how that could be managed.

Q17: MPI has expressed some preferences for options in the paper. Why?

A: MPI does not have a preference on the majority of options in the paper. Where any preference is expressed it is MPI's views prior to consultation only. Any preference expressed in the paper does not represent the Minister's view and does not prevent him from choosing an alternative approach.

Q18: Is MPI looking at reducing the recreational snapper take while backing off a proposed reduction in the commercial quota?

A: MPI is committed to developing a snapper fishery that maximises the benefits to all sectors. We will be seeking input from stakeholders on a full range of options.

Q19: How will the review impact on Maori Customary Fishing Rights?

A: All Maori claims to the commercial take of fish (both marine and freshwater fish) were settled in 1992 (under the Treaty of Waitangi Fisheries Claims Settlements Act 1992). The Settlement requires the Minister to make regulations that recognise and provide for the extent of customary non-commercial fishing. When setting catch quotas an allowance must first be made for customary non-commercial fishing

The availability of snapper impacts on the ability of customary fishers to take catch. MPI does not support limiting the customary harvest.

Q20: Are iwi/hapu affected by the review?

A: Any review of SNA1 quota limits will make an allowance for the level of customary fishing that is required to meet the needs of tangata whenua to provide for customary purposes. However, if

changes are required to be made to recreational catch allowances and fishing rules, tangata whenua who catch fish in a recreational capacity will be affected by any changes to those regulations.

Q21: Is MPI recommending reducing the recreational catch to support its Export Double goal?

A: MPI is consulting on a full range of options. No decision has been made. The Minister for Primary Industries will make a decision after considering the best available information on fish stock, views of stakeholders and advice from MPI.